

STEP 9: IMPLEMENT, TRACK PROGRESS, & SUSTAIN THE PROCESS

Once the action plan is established, the stakeholders or partners can begin to implement the strategies and action steps set forth in the plan. Everyone who has accepted responsibility for specific tasks will need to complete those tasks in a timely manner, consistent with the schedule agreed upon in the action plan. This part of the process is helped by having a diversified and cooperative group of community leaders who share the same vision. For example, having the school superintendent as an advisor and supporter of the healthy community initiative could make it easier to implement proposed actions in the schools.

Another key to implementation is monitoring or routine tracking of events. For example, if your action plans call for monthly reports to be created by a given group on a set topic, monitoring will let you know that this is, indeed, occurring. A good monitoring system will help you understand if the action plan is being implemented as anticipated. Also, remember that it is best to plan how to monitor an initiative before the initiative has begun. Remember, bringing about change may take weeks, months, or years.

Tracking is a two-part step. First, you will need to analyze or evaluate the data you have collected. Then you will need to report the progress. As the implementation of your action plan moves forward, it is important to inform the community of the progress being achieved. You can hold meetings or progress reviews to communicate progress being made in your community.

Evaluation and tracking are vital to the long-term success of your stakeholders' efforts. If you cannot document the health promotion and disease prevention efforts, you may not be able to determine if the adopted strategies improve your community's health concerns. One convenient way to handle this step is to hold regularly scheduled meetings in which everyone reports on actions taken, no matter how small. This type of ongoing support can keep stakeholders interested and involved in the mission. It is important to celebrate small successes along the way to your goal. Your stakeholders will be more likely to stay involved if they can see that their efforts not only are making a difference, but also are appreciated.

Using the local media—school or community papers, television, radio, websites, newsletters, social media —can be an effective way of letting the community know about your efforts.